was approximately 278 days at Chandigarh and 194 days at Jalandhar as on 4.2.94.

(c) Yes, Sir. Additional staff members have started being appointed.

(d) Government have taken a number of steps to expedite the issue of passports which, *inter alia* include augmentation of staff strength, increase in the supply of passport booklets and introduction of a productivity linked incentive scheme. The pendency in Chandigarh and Jalandhar started coming down with effect from July 1993. Government are making every effort to bring it down expeditiously.

Effect of the Earthquake In Los Angeles *on* People on Indien Origin

227. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the houses and business premises of several people of Indian origin suffered extensive damage in the earthquake which devasted the suburbs of Los Angeles recently;

(b) if so, the facts and details of the losses suffered by the people of Indian origin;

(c) whether Government have taken any steps to provide help to the people of Indian origin there; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) and (b) About 500 households were affected in the Los Angeles earthquake out of a total population of approximately 30,000 Indian-Americans in the San Fernando Valley. About 50 homes need to be rebuilt, approximately 150—200 homes suffered substantial damage requiring major repair works and about 250 homes suffered minor damage. Approximately 50 Indian-American owned businesses including motels, restaurants, grocery and liquor stores suffered considerable losses. A few Indian-Americans suffered minor injuries but there was no loss of life.

(c) and (d) Following the earthquake, the Deputy Consul General of India in San Francisco visited Los Angeles and met with members of the Indian American community. At the suggestion of CGI, San Francisco, the Federation of Indo-American Associations (FIA) in Southern California set up a Sub-committee to provide assistance to victims in filing claims for state and federal assistance, dealing with insurance companies, banks etc. India's Consul General in San Fiancisco also visited Los Angeles and met leaders of the Indo-American community. CGI San Francisco continue to maintain regular contact with the Indian community in Los Angeles and to monitor the situation.

Normalisation of Relation between India and Pakistan

228. SHRI BISHAMBHAR NATH PANDE: SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan's anti-India propaganda on Kashmir slowed down normalising relations between India and Pakistan; and

(b) what is the outcome of the recent Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) Pakistan's anti-India campaign, including its attempts to internationalise the J&K issue through its efforts to introduce a resolution on the human rights situation in J&K and its strident and provocative Pakistani statements and actions, vitiate the atmosphere of bilateral relations and are not conducive to the process of normalization of relations.

(b) At the Foreign Secretary level talks held at Islamabad from 1—3 January,

1994 the entire range of bilateral issues including differences related to the Jamnui and Kashmir issue, were discussed. The two sides acknowledged that basic divergences exist and reiterated the need to engage in a meaningful dialogue to address outstanding problems. Government, in pursuance of the discussions at the Foreign Secretary level talks, handed over to Pakistan on 24th January, 1994, six concrete proposals aimed at resolving bilateral differences and normalizing relations. Pakistan's forma! response to our proposals was received on 19 February, 1994 and is under consideration with the Government.

However, during the period since the Foreign Secretary level talks concluded. Pakistan has indulged in a highly provocative propaganda campaign against India and has stepped up its efforts to internationalise the J&K issue. This has vitiated the climate of relations and has a negative impact on the bilateral process.

Indian offer of Help for Peace in Afghanistan

229. SHRI G.Y. KRISHNAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has offered help for peace in war-torn Afghanistan, backing UN efforts to arrange a cease-fire between the warring factions and for ? negotiated settlement of the differences basically over power sharing between the present President Rabbani on one hand and Hekmatyar Dostum alliance on the other; and

(b) if so, the reaction of the Afghanistan Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) and (b) We have always stood for a political settlement in Afghanistan based on the aspirations of the Afghan people and arrived at by the Afghans themselves. Accordingly, India has called upon the international community especially the countries of the region to urgently address the political and security situation in Afghanistan and to undertake a renewed search for peace and stability in that country. We have expressed our willingness to contrbute to any such initiative.

According to reports, no peace initiative has made progress in the direction of an enduring settlement. Fighting among the various groups which erupted on January 1, 1994 in continuing.

Agreement between Indian and Chinese Experts over line of Actual Control

230. SHRI G.Y. KRISHNAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the genesis of the basic agreement reached between Indian and Chinese experts on various issues related to delineation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between the two countries at the first meeting of the expert group held in New Delhi early this month; and

(b) the follow-up action being taken in pursuance thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) During the visit of former Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi to China in 1988, both countries established the India-China Joint Working Group (JWG) which was tasked to seek to create a favourable climate and conditions for a fair and reasonable settlement of the boundary question, while seeking a mutually acceptable solution to this question. Discussions in the JWG resulted in the Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas, which was signed during Prime Minister Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao's visit to China in September 1993.

(b) In pursuance of the Agreement, the India-China Expert Group was formed in December 1993, to assist the